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Mass Suicide, Murder Sweep Sect



Americans Slaughtered on Airstrip

Bodies lie on a Guyana airstrip by the plane which was to carry them back to Georgetown. Rep. Leo Ryan and four other Americans were massacred by members of the People's Temple. (UPI (c) 1978 San Francisco Examiner)

Lane Warned Rep. Ryan of 'Persecution'

By CLARK REID
News-Sentinel Washington Correspondent
WASHINGTON — Memphis lawyer Mark Lane warned U.S. Rep. Leo J. Ryan (D-Calif.) that "further persecution" of an exiled religious group calling itself "The People's Temple" could result in a "most embarrassing situation" for the United States.

Ryan and four other Americans were killed Saturday as they prepared to leave Jonestown, Guyana, after touring the People's Temple compound near there.

The California Representative had flown to Guyana on a congressional fact-



Rep. Leo Ryan



Jim Jones

Compiled from Press Dispatches

GEORGETOWN, Guyana — A Guyana government official said today the band of American religious fanatics who massacred Rep. Leo J. Ryan of California and four other Americans in his party had begun a wave of mass suicide and murder that left 400 persons dead and 600 missing.

Guyana Minister of Information Shirley Field-Ridley said Guyanese troops today captured the headquarters of the People's Temple in the jungle city of Jonestown and found that some of the victims apparently were murdered.

Mrs. Field-Ridley told a news conference that some of the victims "showed signs of violence, including presumed gunshot wounds, which were not consistent with suicide." She said some of the victims showed no signs of violence and were presumed to have been poison victims.

She said a man who fled from the religious community headed by a Californian, Rev. Jim Jones, reached a police station in the jungled interior of Guyana and reported that leaders of the sect were preparing for a mass suicide by poisoning.

Jones, 46, variously called himself the "prophet of God" and "father" and preached a flamboyant mixture of old-time faith healing, racial integration and socialism.

Mrs. Field-Ridley said, "Some of the bodies were found in homes, some were found in clearings in the forests, but no live persons were found . . . The troops are searching for them."

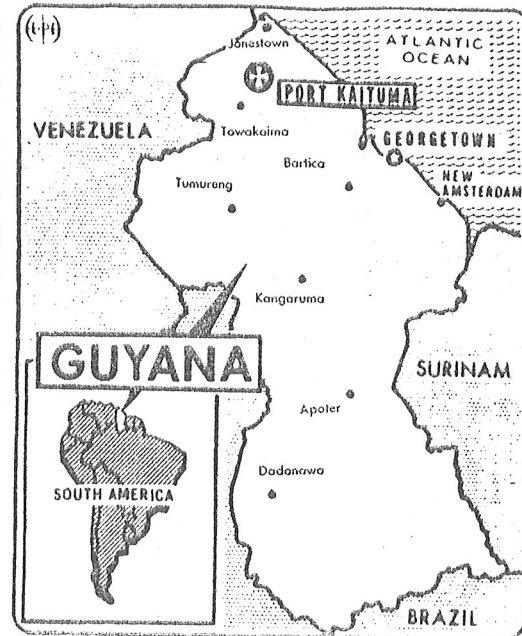
Mrs. Field-Ridley said troops had been unable to locate Jones, a former San Francisco Housing Authority director.

Mrs. Kathy Hunter, a free-lance writer from Ukiah, Calif., who is familiar with the People's Temple sect, said a Guyanese parliament member had told her in a telephone conversation that Jones had committed suicide.

A California psychologist who accompanied Ryan to Guyana to try to get his daughter out of Jonestown said members of the group rehearsed mass suicide and signed undated suicide notes before they left California.

"They will all be dead tomorrow," said Stephen Katzaris, whose son Anthony, 23, was critically wounded in the Saturday night attack in which Ryan, a California Democrat, was killed.

Ryan, accompanied by aides, reporters, and relatives of some sect members, came to this former British colony on the northeastern shoulder of South America last week to investigate reports of large-



scale abuses of members of the religious group.

The U.S. Representative, 53, was killed by a shotgun blast as he attempted to take several disenchanted members of the sect back to Georgetown by plane.

A knife-wielding assailant had attempted to stab Ryan earlier while the Representative was visiting Jonestown. Two members of Ryan's group, including lawyer Mark Lane, disarmed the attacker, and Ryan was not injured.

The dead included three newsmen and one of the settlement's defectors. Ten persons were wounded, three seriously, and the husband of one of the wounded had a stroke. The U.S. Embassy said they were all Americans.

Survivors of the attack said a band of black and white members of the People's

Temple opened fire with automatic weapons and shotguns as Ryan and his party were boarding planes at the Port Kaituma airstrip, eight miles south of Jonestown and 150 miles northwest of Georgetown.

In San Francisco, a People's Temple spokesman who identified himself as Archie James denied that members of the sect did the airport killings.

Ryan, reporter Don Harris, 42, and cameraman Robert Brown, 36, both of NBC News and both Los Angeles residents; Gregory Robinson, 27, a photographer for The San Francisco Examiner, and Patricia Parks or Parker, 18, who was trying to escape from Jonestown,

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flown to Guyana on a congressional fact-finding mission to determine whether any American citizens were being held against their will by the leader of the religious faction, former San Francisco politician Jim Jones.

Lane, who represents Jones, had accompanied Ryan's party on the tour. One news report indicated Lane also had been killed when the group was attacked by gunmen. State Department officials, however, indicate Lane escaped.

Lane's warning to Ryan was made in a letter dated Nov. 6, 1978, and was released today by Ryan's administrative assistant, Joe Holsinger.

In that letter Lane charged that "various agencies of the U.S. Government have somewhat consistently oppressed the People's Temple Institution."

"Some of the members of the People's Temple have had to flee from the U.S. in order to experience a fuller opportunity to enjoy rights which were not available to them within the U.S.," wrote Lane.

The attorney implied that the alleged persecution was continuing in Guyana and that the 1200-member cult had been "offered refuge" in two other countries.

Lane told Ryan that Jones and his faction had not accepted the two other offers, but "it is their position that if religious persecution continues and if it is furthered through a witch hunt conducted by any branch of the U.S. Govern-

See LETTER, Page A-2

Eyewitness Tells of Massacre, Nightmarish Wait for Rescue

The following eyewitness account of the killings in Guyana was written by San Francisco Chronicle reporter Ron Javers, who was wounded Saturday in the gunfire that killed Rep. Leo Ryan and four others on a remote airstrip in Guyana. Javers, who was en route to Washington with the other wounded, dictated the story to his city desk — THE EDITOR.

By RON JAVERS

(c) San Francisco Chronicle

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Jonestown is every evil thing that everybody thought — and worse.

We knew that before the shooting started.

The slaughter began at 4:20 p.m. Saturday (Guyana time) while we were standing beside the twin-engine airplane that had brought us to Port Kaituma, seven miles outside Jonestown, on Friday and that had returned to pick us up.

I was waiting between Bob Brown and Don Harris, the two NBC men who were killed. We had become close friends during the course of our ordeal.

The firing erupted from guns close by. I was hit first. I was knocked to the ground by a slug in the left shoulder, apparently from a 38-caliber weapon.

I crawled behind the right wheel of the plane.

Bob Brown stayed on his feet and kept filming what was happening, even as the attackers advanced on him with their guns.

He was incredibly tenacious. While I was trying to decide whether to stay where I was or risk the 100-yard-dash across the close-cropped grass field to the jungle, I saw Brown go down.

Then I saw one of the attackers stick a shotgun right into Brown's face, inches away, if that. (Then the attacker shot him.)

I'll never forget that sight as long as I live.

I ran, and then I dived head-first into the brush.

I got up and scrambled as far into the swamp as I could. I was about 150 yards from the airstrip and up to my waist in water.

I pushed through the rain forest, walking parallel to the runway, trying to figure out what had happened.

I couldn't see much. I had lost both pairs of glasses I had with me.

But there was silence. Apparently the party of attackers which must have included four, five or six men with guns, had fled.

I was far down the field by the time I returned to the airstrip.

And then, like the other survivors, I returned to the crippled plane.

Leo Ryan was on his back in a blue cord suit, lying in the mud in front of the right wheel of the aircraft.

Don Harris lay alongside the middle of the plane.

Brown was at the tail of the 18-passenger Otter.

Pattie Parker, one of the people who had asked us to help her escape from Jonestown, was lying at the foot of the plane's stairs.

Greg Robinson, The San Francisco Examiner photographer at the scene, was at the left wheel.

There were four Guyanese soldiers at the far end of the field.

They told us they had not been able to shoot at the attackers during the assault because they were afraid they would kill still more people.

The only policeman at the field, carrying a single-shell shotgun, had been disarmed the moment the men from the People's Temple began firing from their truck and trailer while we were getting ready to board the two planes; our own craft and the smaller one that was set to carry away the fugitives from Jonestown.

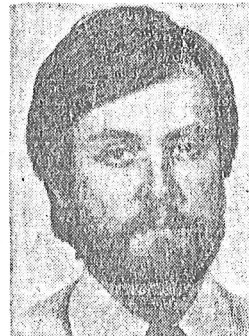
As nearly as we could tell, about half the attackers were white and half were black. Those of us who had survived were still terrified.

We took our most seriously wounded to the soldiers' tent and then we retired into Port Kaituma, the settlement next to the airstrip and went into a small cafe called a rum house.

The local Guyanese knew they were risking their own safety by letting us stay, but they were extremely kind to us.

We stood watches during the stormy night — taking turns standing guard in pairs outside the police hut where our wounded were lying.

The heavy tropical storm made



UPI Telephoto

Ron Javers
'I Was One of the Lucky Ones'

movement difficult and uncomfortable — not only for us but those who had chosen us as their quarry.

The rain may have saved our lives.

Every time we heard a noise, especially whenever we heard a truck along the Port Kaituma road, we thought we would be attacked again.

Of course, none of us had any weapons.

And time moved slowly, infinitely slowly.

When we first reached Jonestown, on Friday night, the atmosphere was lively and cordial. We found ourselves getting a real Cook's Tour, with everything arranged for us. There was great rock music from the Jonestown band and entertainment during dinner.

And while we tried, mainly at first, to get away from the organized fun, we were told how happy everyone was.

But before we left for an evening's drive through foot-deep mud to Port Kaituma, a young man slipped Don Harris of NBC a message written on a child's slate, saying, 'Please help me get out of Jonestown.'

It had four signatures.

Back in Port Kaituma, where the entire group of us spent Friday night in a tin-roofed disco — a small beer parlor with a phonograph and a few records — local Guyanese began telling us horror stories.

They told us about one man who had escaped from the colony last summer, only to be captured by guards from Jonestown and then beaten.

When we returned the following morning to Jonestown, we were not surprised to see Jim Jones' carefully stage-managed production start to crack.

Edith Parker, one of the 1200 followers trapped in Jonestown, approached Rep. Ryan and said she wanted to leave with him.

The list grew.

About an hour before it was time for us to leave Jonestown, nine people said they wanted to go.

Then 12.

Finally, about 20 got up their courage to defy Jones.

There were too many of us for one

truckload. The reporters and cameramen were told we would go out in the first batch, but Rep. Ryan would wait to leave in the second.

We were relieved to be going.

Jones agreed that the 20 people who wanted to could leave with us. He even said he thought they might be "better off" somewhere else if they no longer wanted to stay in Jonestown.

Suddenly, there was a commotion in the central building that serves as the colony's meeting place — a large structure with a tin roof and packed dirt floor. A cheer rang through the crowd.

Then, a young white man made a direct lunge at Ryan with a knife.

The blade was at Ryan's throat when Mark Lane and Charles Garry, Jones' attorneys and long-time supporters, grabbed the weapon.

The attacker was cut before he could be disarmed.

And Ryan's shirt was drenched with the attacker's blood.

Ryan ran to the truck at that point and we lumbered off through the mud to the airstrip.

Shaken by what he thought was his successful narrow escape, Ryan told us as we reached the airstrip, "I wouldn't be alive if it was not for Mark Lane."

Ryan lived only a few minutes longer.

After the violence of the attack at the airstrip, we still had to wait for rescue.

It was getting dark, and there was no chance for a rescue plane until morning.

We spent the night listening to the stories the 12 former residents of Jonestown had to tell.

They corroborated every evil story about the place that we had heard.

They told us how Jim Jones had led the entire colony into making a moniacal suicide pact with him.

They talked about stores of weapons in the so-called peaceful jungle mission.

And whenever there was a crisis, they recalled, Jones had assembled the whole colony into a huge circular assembly and mesmerized them into agreement.

We understood then why there had been an ominous cheer from the People's Temple residents at Jonestown before the young knife-wielder charged at Ryan.

Daybreak — which we never expected to see, finally came.

At 8:30 a.m., the first batch of Guyanese troops arrived at Port Kaituma.

They had flown to a landing field at Mathews Ridge about 30 miles away, and were transported by truck about halfway from the ridge to where we were waiting.

Then, to ensure themselves against being ambushed in exposed vehicles, they completed their march on foot.

Still more troops arrived.

There were enough at last to secure the perimeter of the Port Kaituma airstrip. It was still fairly early in the morning.

While 80 soldiers marched to Jonestown to make sure no more marauders could sweep out from the deadly settlement, rescue flights arrived to take out the survivors.

Five in our group were critically or severely wounded.

Tim Reiterman, reporter from The Examiner, with two bullet wounds in his left arm, and I with my shoulder wound, were among the lucky ones.

400 Dead, 600 Missing in Cult Mass Suicide, Murders

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were killed. Her home address was not known.

A White House statement said President Carter was saddened by Ryan's death. "It was his drive to get information at first hand that led to his tragic death," the statement said.

Lawyers Lane and Charles Garry came to Guyana with Ryan to act as counsel for Jones. Lane, who had been reported missing for hours, was not harmed and was in Georgetown, according to his staff members in Memphis.

There was no word on the whereabouts of Garry, who survivors said remained behind at Jonestown to try to negotiate the release of another settler.

One survivor, NBC field producer Robert Flick, said the killers fired 50 to 75 shots at Ryan's group as the planes were being loaded.

"People were being wounded and falling to the ground. As they fell, people with shotguns would walk over and at point-blank range shoot the victim in the head," Flick said in an account broadcast by NBC. "That was how Ryan and Harris died."

According to Flick, there were eight to 12 gunmen, both black and white.

Survivors fled into jungle while they stayed until nightfall.

The government flew troops to Port Kaituma yesterday, and Flick said they arrested nine suspects. A Guyanese government spokesman in New York, Jack Gelinas, said one of those arrested was an American named Larry John Leyton. His home address was not revealed.

Police and soldiers arrived at Port Kaituma at daybreak and a Guyanese military plane ferried the survivors back to Georgetown. A U.S. Air Force C141 took them to Puerto Rico and to Andrews Air Force Base in Washington.

The bodies remained at Port Kaituma. State Department spokesman Tom Reston said they were to be brought to Georgetown where autopsies would be performed to comply with Guyanese law in cases involving homicide.

The most hospitalized at the Roosevelt Roads Naval Base in Puerto Rico were Anthony Katsaris, of Potter Valley, Calif., wounded in the chest; Ben Gozney, who was fleeing from Jonestown and was wounded in the abdomen; and Beverly Oliver of San Francisco, who had two sons in Jonestown and was wounded in both legs.

A Navy spokesman said Mrs. Oliver's husband, Howard, suffered a stroke in Georgetown and was hospitalized with his wife.

Five of the survivors were hospitalized at Andrews. They were Jackie Speier, one of Ryan's aides, who was listed in serious condition with "extensive gunshot wounds"; San Francisco Chronicle reporter Ron Javers and NBC soundman Steve Sung, with shoulder wounds; San Francisco Examiner reporter Tim Reiterman, wounded in the forearm; and Carolyn Boyd, who was being treated for shock and emotional stress.

Richard Dwyer, deputy chief of the

U.S. Embassy in Georgetown, was slightly injured, and so was Washington Post reporter Charles Krause.

Jones, who is married and has seven children, was born in Indiana, the son of a poor, interracial couple. At one time, he was listed among his friends Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr., Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone, who appointed Jones chairman of the city Housing Authority after the People's Temple helped him win the mayoral election in 1975.

But Jones' star faded after a series of allegations by former members. They complained that his methods of control included beatings and exhausting work schedules, and accused him of extorting huge sums of money and issuing death threats to anyone who strayed from the church or discredited it.

The rigid discipline was designed, former members said, to toughen members so they could survive a nuclear holocaust or a fascist takeover of the United States, which Jones had predicted.

Former members said Jones' following submitted to his authoritarian regime because his rules and rituals left them financially dependent on the church, terrified and often brainwashed.

Deaths

Dana Austin Baker, 78, 1515 Isabella Tower.
William Wayne Collins, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. William Collins, LaFollette.
Iris Byrl (Belle) Cook, 57, Norman Rd., Powell.
Mrs. Arthur C. (Roberta Webb) Dore, 91, 3611 Kesterwood Rd.
Miss Helen Irene Caston, Century Court.
Mrs. Henry (Grace) Grinnie, 73, 5317 Shamrock Drive.
Mrs. Elhel Curtis Ford Hall, 89, Danville, Va.
Mrs. Raymond (Mildred) Harper, 68, Rt. 4, Newport.
Mrs. Julia Hall, 84, Rt. 4, Clinton.
Mrs. William (Gustavo B.) Irwin, 80, 1905 Nickerson Ave.
Mrs. Walter (Florence Mae) Isley, 62, Jefferson City.
Mrs. Marshall (Irene C.) Jenkins, 67, Rt. 4, Lehigh City.
Mrs. Thomas (Stella) Perry, 78, 1237 Island Home Blvd.
Mrs. Blanche Proctor Slade, 2716 Linden Ave.
Roger D. Smith, 18, Rt. 2, Seymour.
K.G. Stevens, 57, Oliver Springs.
James Milton Stooksbury, 65, Andersonville.
Everett L. Summers, 49, Thomas Weaver Road.
Homer Talley, 65, Rt. 1, Dybbie.
Paul Stooksbury, 49, Orangeburg, S.C., formerly of Knoxville.
Otto Murrill, 76, Sevierville.
Fred R. Arnold, 80, 513 N. Central St.
Larry Coleman, 45, 215 Stooksbury St.
Mrs. Margie Lane, 52, 2812 Jersey Ave.
Johnny Sharp, 10, 4404 Washington Pike.
Clyde E. Mouliden, 64, Sevierville.
Tom G. Helton, 78, Seymour.
Mrs. Grace McGhee, 64, Carville.
William E. (Bill) Webb, 46, Harriman.
Michael J. Armetta, 27, Mobile, Ala., formerly of Knoxville.
Dave Riseden, 94, Mehaffey Road, Rt. 8, Powell.
Guy Willille, 53, New Market.

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ment . . . they will be constrained to consider accepting either offer."

"You may judge, therefore," Lane wrote, "the important consequences which may flow from further persecution of People's Temple and which might very well result in the creation of a most embarrassing situation for the U.S. Government."

In a Nov. 10 reply to Lane, Ryan challenged the attorney's charges of Government persecution, adding that his investigation of the People's Temple was at the request of relatives of members of the cult who were concerned about their welfare.

"It is true that most of the comments I have heard from relatives are negative, but that is precisely the purpose of this inquiry," wrote Ryan. "Rather than take the word of relatives who can be presumed to be under some emotional bias, I intend to go to the source and to allow those 'on the other side' the opportunity

to speak in their own behalf."

Ryan added, "I am truly disappointed with your (Lane's) use of the phrase 'witch hunt' in connection with an open and honest inquiry of the United States House of Representatives into the welfare of American citizens presently living in Jonestown."

The congressman told Lane "your vague reference to the creation of a most embarrassing situation" for the United States, "does not impress me at all."

"If the comment is intended as a threat, I believe it reveals more than may have been intended," Ryan concluded ironically.

Lane saved Ryan from a possibly fatal knifing at the Guyana camp shortly before Ryan was killed at the airstrip.

The first attempt on Ryan's life was thwarted when Lane grabbed the knife of a young man who lunged at the Representative, according to an eyewitness reporter.

Catholic High Grad Dies in Cycle Wreck

A former Knoxville man was killed Saturday in a motorcycle accident in Mobile, Ala., his family has learned.

Michael J. Armetta, 27, a graduate of Knoxville Catholic High School, was working in Mobile as a machinist. He was a graduate of Faulkner Junior College in Mobile, and a member of the Church of

the Immaculate Conception.

He leaves his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Armetta, S. Haven Road; sisters, Mrs. Jan (Pat) Vahagus, Mississippi, and Mrs. Hurtle (Debbie) Hilton, Knoxville; grandmother, Mrs. Annitte Armetta, Knoxville.

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